
JOEL'S PROPHECY OF BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT AND FIRE

Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire was prophesied by both Joel and John the Baptist (Joel 2:28-30; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). The Hebrew word for Spirit is found 388 times in the Old Testament. The Greek word for Spirit is used 378 times in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit was the Agent in the reconstruction of the chaotic state of creation. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). The earth became without form and void, and darkness was on the deep. The Spirit moved on the chaotic state of creation (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit had a part in the beginning of man (Gen. 2:7). He did not always strive with man through the ministry of the word (Gen. 6:3). Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came on judges, craftsmen, prophets, and civil leaders in the Old Testament for their empowerment for a particular mission (Num. 24:2; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; etc.), and then He departed from them (I Sam. 16:14). At Pentecost, the assembly was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Five of the seven references to baptism in the Spirit were prophetic (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5). The other two are historical

(Acts 11:16; I Cor. 12:13). Subsequent to Pentecost, the New Testament speaks of being born of the Spirit (John 3:5-8), having been baptized in the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13), having been sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13), being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and having been anointed with the Spirit (I John 2:20,27; II Cor. 1:21).

The word “fire” is used more than 375 times in the Bible, and about 76 of those are in the New Testament. The Hebrew word is *esh*. It is used in the context of either God’s revelation of Himself to man or man’s approach to God in worship. In order to properly interpret this word in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16, some of its uses in the Old Testament should be considered.

When Adam and Eve fell, the sword like fire protected the way into the garden so that in order to get back into the garden of Eden they must go through fire (Gen. 3:24). Fire symbolizes separation of life in the separation of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden by the flaming sword. The climax of God’s covenant with Abraham was by a lamp of fire (Gen. 15:17). God appeared to Moses in a blazing flame of fire (Ex. 3:2,4). The Lord descended on Mount Sinai in fire (Ex. 19:18). Ezekiel’s vision was dominated by fire (Ezek. 1:26,27). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire is a symbol of God’s judgment on those cities (Gen. 18;19). Korah, with 250 followers, was consumed by fire (Num. 16:32-35). God destroyed Nadab and Abihu with fire because they offered strange fire (Lev. 10:1,2). Fire symbolizes cleansing (Is. 6:1-9; Mal. 3:2). Conclusively, in the Old Testament, fire symbolizes separation, judgment, destruction, and cleansing.

To one person fire means death, and to another it means life. Fire refers to God’s revelation of Himself and man’s approach to God by means of a sacrifice. Where fire and blood are mentioned together one thinks of sacrifice which is bless-

ing. This is demonstrated in the offerings of Leviticus 1-5. But where there is fire without blood there is a curse.

The New Testament Greek word for fire is *pur*. It is used a few times in a literal sense (Matt. 17:15; Luke 22:55; Acts 28:5). It is used symbolically of the Spirit (Acts 2:3), of the judgment seat of Jesus Christ where our works will be tried so as by fire (I Cor. 3:13-15), of God as a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), and of the Lord Jesus as He judges the assemblies (Rev. 1:14). The word denotes judgment in many of the approximately 76 references. Since John was predicting blessing when he said Jesus Christ would baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire, how could judgment be a blessing? This will be considered later in our discussion.

The prophecy of Joel, some of which was quoted by Peter at Pentecost, may be divided in the following manner: (1) Joel foretold the day of the Lord (chap. 1). (2) In view of the day of the Lord, Joel exhorted and consoled the people (chap. 2). (3) Although the bondage of God's people may be long and grievous, it shall not be everlasting (chap. 3).

The day of the Lord, which will be associated with fire, is described in Joel 1:1-10 and foreshadowed in verse 15. National calamity came on Israel. The memory of God's judgment should be transmitted to all posterity and written for the generations to come (Ps. 102:18). Israel should let their woes be warnings, their sufferings be standing sermons, and their corrections be instructions for future generations. Paul gave the same kind of instruction to the Corinthian saints when he drew from Old Testament analogies. A record should be kept of God's great works, whether they were for blessings or punishments, as a list for the benefit of posterity, not with vain affection of wit but with holy gravity.

The insects listed in Joel 1:4 were instruments of Divine

judgment. Joel was calling Israel to repentance in order to avert a more serious judgment. The palmerworm derives its name in the Hebrew from shaving, because it shaves the fruit from the earth. The locust derives its name in Hebrew from multitude. It crops the tops of plants. The cankerworm derives its name in Hebrew from licking. It feeds on flowers and fruit. The caterpillar derives its name from wasting, because it utterly consumes fruit, branches, and all. Joel was calling the people to repentance in order to avert a more serious judgment by means of hostile armies, of which the insects he mentioned were only types. Each invasion was with more intense destruction. What one insect left, the next devoured until all was destroyed. This is more than history. It is prophecy, a type of another more terrible invasion which had its partial fulfillment in the day of Joel and will have its complete fulfillment in the day of the Lord.

Instruction to the people in view of their judgmental circumstances was to lament like a virgin (1:8), be ashamed (1:11), and gird yourselves (1:13). Joel was calling them to repentance. The Lord's ministers and the land mourned (1:9,10). The land lies under the curse of barrenness, even at its best. Creation is groaning because of the curse, waiting for the time the curse will be lifted (Rom. 8:20-22). The offerings were no longer being made (1:13). The priests should sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather in the house of God, and cry to the Lord (1:14). The place where they were to assemble was "into the house of the LORD your God." He was their God by virtue of the covenant. He is ours by virtue of the eternal covenant of grace. The object of this day was for repentance and confession of sins. There must be humiliation in order for a person to have proper reflection on the things of the Lord. Private mourning and humiliation are not enough under public calamities. A time should be appointed to come to the appointed place that the fast should be made known. There was no example of fasting before Moses. Neither the

Savior nor the apostles instituted any particular fast. True fasting results when believers become so consumed with holy business that everything else is laid aside.

There is a lesson in this for us today. The person with God-given faith embraces Christ; his praying embraces the sovereignty of God; and his fasting denies himself. Because of the desolated condition of the institutional assembly, which is lying in spiritual waste today inflicted by many spiritual foes, we have spiritual drought. As in the days of the prophecy of Amos (Amos 8:11), there is a famine for the word of God in all its purity. The call goes forth to repent, but people will not repent. This repentance must begin with the leaders. Because of famine for the word of God and the worship of God, the judgment of God came in Joel's time. America cannot continue the way she is going without experiencing the judgment of God.

The day of the Lord was interpreted in Joel 1:15. Joel prophesied that it would come as a destruction. The day of the Lord would be associated with fire (Joel 1:19,20). The Spirit took the opportunity afforded by an unparalleled scarcity of things in Joel's time to awaken the people in respect to the day of the Lord. National calamity came on Israel, which foreshadows the great and terrible day in which God's power shall be manifested in judgment.

The blowing of the trumpet is linked with the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1). The priests' duty was to blow the trumpet. There were two trumpets blown in Israel (Num. 10). The trumpets come in with striking fitness after the instruction respecting the movement of the cloud. They were made of one piece of silver, but they served a dual purpose. One was blown to assemble the people, and the other was blown for an alarm to alert the Israelites for journeying.

The trumpet must give a distinct message. This ancient custom of the Old Testament to give a distinct message is for us today. The man of God must give a certain message in order that the people of God may prepare themselves for battle: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (I Cor. 14:8). Shall we permit men to advance into judgment without being warned? Should we remain quiet and not give a distinct sound? People must be exposed to truth whether or not they heed it. Sounding the alarm is not a warning concerning what has already taken place but the warning pertaining to that which was about to take place. This follows the description of the dread army which was to overrun the land.

The day of the Lord is accompanied with darkness, gloominess, clouds, thick darkness, and fire (Joel 2:2,3). Joel was giving a prophecy of the end time when fire will devour before the people; a flame will burn behind them; and behind them there will be a desolate wilderness. Nothing shall escape them (Joel 2:3). “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” (Joel 2:10).

Darkness is the emblem of intense sorrow, but light is the emblem of joy. The image describes the universality of darkness. Darkness will grow darker. In this instance, instead of the mountain tops catching the gladdening rays of the early morning sun and the light spreading from one height to another until the whole earth is arrayed in light, all will become darkness. Apostasy will continue to escalate until the end time. The greatness of Israel’s sin brought judgment, and it will bring a terrible time of judgment which she has not seen, even in the years of her captivity.

The day of the Lord is described as “great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:11). In view of the coming day

and God's intervention, Israel should repent. An event too clear to miss is the appeal to the nation to repent before the judgment of God fell (Joel 2:12-17). There is a turning with the brain without turning with the heart. However, alteration is required of not only the mind but also the affections of the heart. Without a change in the affections of the heart, repentance is not genuine. Christians know that when the Lord appeals to us to repent, repentance is needed; and we escape chastisement only by running to God.

Repentance is represented in Scripture as renewing from decay, refining from dross, recovering from a malady, cleansing from soil, rising from a fall, or turning. Some rend neither their hearts nor their garments. Others rend their garments and not their hearts, and some rend their hearts and garments. Inward sorrow and outward expression must both be manifested. Inward sorrow is manifested by what we consistently do. When the heart is made clean, the garment is also made white. A rent heart is followed by a rent veil and a rent heaven (Matt. 27:51; Is. 64:1).

The nation was also called to fast. Fasting is self-denial. Feeding the flesh will increase corruption (Jer. 5:7,8). Abstinence subdues the flesh. This is what Paul had in mind when he said he buffeted his body to keep it in subjection (I Cor. 9:27). Fasting days and soul fattening days are not the same. The nation was called to weeping and mourning. Peter never looked as good as when he wept bitter tears in repentance. A Christian out of the will of God never looks better than when he is weeping bitter tears of repentance. King David illustrates this in Psalms 6 and 51. Repentance includes fasting and mourning. What is a humbling day without a humble heart? Sorrow for sin must not be light and sudden but heavy and piercing. Israel must rend their hearts and not their garments (Joel 2:13).

The appeal was heeded. The priests, the ministers of the Lord, led out in the turning. They wept between the porch and the altar. The porch denotes fellowship with God, and the altar proclaims accomplished redemption. Israel repented and manifested repentance. The Lord blessed her (Joel 2:18,19), emancipated her (Joel 2:20), prospered her (Joel 2:21-27), judged the Gentile nations (Joel 3:1-8), and promised kingdom blessings (Joel 3:17-21).

God promised repentant Israel former and latter rain (Joel 2:23). Charismatics claim that the former rain refers to the original outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the latter rain denotes the charismatic revival of the last days. Contrary to their opinion, this verse and James 5:7-8 are linked: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Hence, the rain ties with the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by Joel, and the latter rain designates an event which will immediately precede Christ's second coming.

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The law and the prophets were “until” John the Baptist (Luke 16:16). His prediction of Christ’s baptizing in the Holy Spirit and fire, like the Old Testament prophecies, made no distinction between Christ’s first and second advents. The Holy Spirit led him to speak of the partial near fulfillment at Pentecost and the complete remote fulfillment at Christ’s second advent. John’s question to Christ from prison by his disciples, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3), shows he did not understand the time lapse between Christ’s two advents. Furthermore, the disciples having come together were questioning the Lord saying, “Are you at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6—translation). The Lord replied, “It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father placed in His own authority” (Acts 1:7—translation). The Lord’s reply does not contradict the future establishment of the kingdom.

John and the disciples understood the nature of the kingdom, but they were ignorant concerning the time of its

establishment. The time of the kingdom's establishment remains a secret with the Father (Matt. 24:36). The Son Himself, because of His subordination to the Father, said He did not know the time (Mark 13:32). This does not indicate that He does not know all things. But He spoke in subordination to the Father. He was the perfect One and always did the will of His Father. Conclusively, the disciples knew nothing of a kingdom already set up. It was not set up at the first advent of Jesus Christ. Surely the apostles would have known if Christ had already established the kingdom. Subsequent to Pentecost, the apostles did not preach that the kingdom had been established. Jesus Christ did not correct the disciples pertaining to their view of the kingdom. Restoring the kingdom to Israel could mean nothing else than the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees when he said, "I am baptizing you in water because of your repentance: but the One coming after me is stronger than I, of whom I am not worthy to be carrying His sandals; He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire" (translation). They were the ones going out to be baptized by him (Matt. 3:7). In Luke 3:7, Luke stated, "Then he was saying to the crowds going out to be baptized by [*hupo*, ablative of agency] him, offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from [*apo*, ablative of separation] the coming wrath?" (translation). In both Matthew and Luke, the context of each passage proves John's prediction of Christ's baptizing in the Holy Spirit and fire was addressed primarily to the Israelites. He was warning them of coming judgment. The ax was already being laid at the root of the tree, and God was about to speak to them of judgment in his message (Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9). God will manifest His wrath on all the unregenerate. John's prophecy of Christ's baptizing in the Spirit and fire was a blessing to the regenerate but a curse to the unregenerate. In like manner, our proclamation of truth is a savor

of life to those the Holy Spirit regenerates, but it is a savor of death to the unregenerate (II Cor. 2:14-16).

John's prediction of Christ's baptizing in the Holy Spirit and fire should be considered from each of the synoptic Gospels. Matthew included fire in his account: "I am baptizing you in water because of your repentance, but the One coming after me is stronger than I, of whom I am not worthy to be carrying His sandals: He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt. 3:11—translation). Mark's short account of John's prophecy eliminated fire: "I baptized you in water: but He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8—translation). Luke included fire in his Gospel: "John answered, saying to all, I indeed baptize you in water; but someone stronger than I is coming, of whom I am not worthy to untie His sandals: He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16—translation). John omitted fire: "And I had not known Him: but the One having sent me to baptize in water, that One said to me, on whomever you may see the Spirit coming down, and remaining on Him, this is the One baptizing in the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33—translation). Luke, who also wrote Acts, did not include the word fire in Acts 1:5—"John indeed baptized in water; but you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days after these" (translation).

Luke's account of this subject is more detailed than Matthew's. It is recorded in Luke 3:7-18. Both Matthew and Luke make reference to the fan in Christ's hand (Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17). Four references are made to judgment by both writers: (1) The ax, which destroys, is a means of judgment. (2) The shovel is an element of judgment because as the winnowing shovel does its work, the chaff is blown away by the wind. (3) Fire, which indicates destruction, is a means of judgment. Matthew calls it unquenchable fire in Matthew 3:12. (4) Wrath is also a means of judgment. Both Matthew

and Luke use the word fire three times (Matt. 3:10,11,12; Luke 3:9,16,17). It is clear that fire has reference to judgment. The first reference to fire is connected with judging the unfruitful trees; the second, with the blessing of judging by believers in the future; and the third, with final judgment at the great white throne.

Baptism in the Spirit and fire cannot be regeneration—the new birth. Some believe that baptism in the Spirit is one thing and fire cleanses like the Holy Spirit. But that would be redundant. It would be equivalent to saying baptized in the Holy Spirit and baptized in the Holy Spirit. The baptism of those at Pentecost was an added blessing to already regenerated persons. The Lord Jesus had breathed on the apostles. He said to them, “Peace to you: as my Father has sent me, I also am sending you. And saying this, He breathed on them, saying, Receive at once the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21,22—translation). His breathing on them was a foretaste of Pentecost, which was a foretaste of the kingdom. Every child of God has the guarantee of what Christ promised to partially take place in the near future (Eph. 1:13) and completely take place in the remote future (Acts 2:17). Baptism in the Holy Spirit was designated for the uniting of Jews and non-Jews into the assembly that Jesus Christ has already established and of which the apostles were the foundation. Hence, the infant assembly was empowered at Pentecost for the proclamation of the gospel.

At the beginning of the history of the assembly, the early disciples had extraordinary as well as ordinary power. As a result, they had extraordinary and ordinary gifts. The extraordinary power and gifts continued until the completion of the word of God. Some argue that since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, this extraordinary power and gifts continue. Jesus Christ is eternally the same because He is God, and God does not change. However, He does change

His methods. His present method is through ordinary officers with ordinary God-given gifts.

used in I Corinthians 12:13 signifies that the baptism in the Spirit took place in the past at Pentecost. The indicative is the mood of reality; therefore, it actually took place at that time. The ones assembled with one accord in one place of Acts 2:1-4 were the 120 disciples of the Lord waiting in the upper room for the partial fulfillment of the promise by John which is recorded in Acts 1:5. (See Acts 1:12-15.) Since Christians were baptized, this baptism could not be regeneration. There is a difference between being born of the Spirit and being baptized in the sphere of the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit, and those born of the Spirit were all baptized in that infant assembly. Therefore, our baptism in the Spirit was in that baptism.

The feast of Pentecost, which is called the feast of weeks in Deuteronomy 16:9-16 and II Chronicles 8:13, is described in Leviticus 23:16-22. This feast was observed by Israel fifty days after the feast of passover when the children of Israel brought a sheaf of the firstfruits (Lev. 23:10). The sheaf foreshadowed Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The sheaf, like Christ, needed no preparation. He was absolutely holy. The feast of weeks harmonizes with what took place at Pentecost.

The three parts to baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost were foreshadowed in the feast of weeks—Pentecost—to which there were three parts. “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 23:22). In this verse, note the three parts of Pentecost foreshadowed: (1) “Ye” refers to the Jews who are associated with the “harvest.” (2) The “poor” designates the non-Jews who are connected with the “corners of thy field.” (3) The “stranger” calls attention to non-Jews who are related to the “gleaning of thy harvest.”

This feast was partially fulfilled in the three parts of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came on Jews—Acts 2, Samaritans—Acts 8, and Gentiles—Acts 10, but not on “all flesh [mankind]” (Joel 2:28). (1) Acts 2—The Jews assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem were baptized in the Holy Spirit to correspond with “ye” in Leviticus 23:22. (2) Acts 8—The Samaritans in Samaria were baptized in the Holy Spirit in answer to the “poor” in Leviticus 23:22. These were not full-blooded Jews. (3) Acts 10—The Gentiles in the end of the earth (Acts 1:8) were baptized in the Holy Spirit to correspond with the “strangers”—non-Jews—in Leviticus 23:22. These were the three parts of Pentecost when these three groups received a foretaste of that which shall be completely fulfilled in the future.

Baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost empowered the infant assembly, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles between whom the middle wall of partition is broken down, for witnessing during the assembly age: “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NASB). Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (Matt. 16:18), and the apostles became the foundation of the assembly (Eph. 2:20). The age of the assembly, which began with Christ and His apostles, experienced a foretaste of what John predicted for Israel (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16).

Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit, is the Agent in baptism in the Spirit. There are only seven references to baptism in the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; I Cor. 12:13). The first five references are prophetic, and the last two are historical. Five look forward to the day of Pentecost, and two are historical of what took place at Pentecost. There is no such thing as any individual being baptized in, with, or by the Holy Spirit today. Let us consider

the last historical reference: “For indeed in one Spirit we were all baptized [*ebaptisthemen*, aorist passive indicative of *baptidzo*] into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free; and we were all made to drink one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13—translation). The indicative mood is the mood of reality, and the passive voice means the Lord Jesus was the Agent of this baptism. Is that not what John said? “...He [Jesus Christ] shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11b—translation). The Holy Spirit is the sphere into which Jesus Christ baptized the infant assembly. The passive voice signifies that the infant assembly did not participate in it. It is historical. It has been fulfilled. Born again people have been baptized by Jesus Christ into the sphere of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism at Pentecost was collective. It included Christ’s body, that is, His assembly. There is not one reference to an individual being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The assembly as a whole was baptized in the sphere of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This was not the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh in the kingdom. That is future. The disciples knew nothing of a kingdom having been set up. Israel as a nation did not enter the events of Pentecost. They knew the nature of the kingdom but not the time of its establishment. Pentecost was a foretaste of what will yet be experienced by God’s people as a whole. The Holy Spirit led Luke to include fire in John’s prediction in Luke 3:16 and to omit it from Acts 1:5 when he predicted what would take place in a few days. He made no reference to fire in the latter reference, because what fire represents would not be fulfilled in a few days. The terrible “day of the Lord” would not take place at Pentecost. Pentecost would be only a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.

The present work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is recorded in Ephesians 5:18—“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Being filled with the Spirit means being continually controlled by means of the Spirit. There is no baptism in the Spirit since Pentecost. The elect are born of the Spirit (John 3:8), sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13), possess the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14), and have the Spirit as our guide (Rom. 8:14) and as our teacher (I John 2:20,27). As all the elect who constitute the assembly died with Christ at Calvary, we were all baptized by Christ into one body at Pentecost. As we were legally in Christ before regeneration, we were legally in the body before we were born of the Spirit.

The reverse of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh at Pentecost is demonstrated throughout Acts, and it has been demonstrated for nearly 2,000 years. When the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh, the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and there will be no more war, confusion, or chaos. Hence, the very opposite of all flesh being immersed in the sphere of the Spirit is proved by what followed Pentecost. Christians are persecuted; there are wars; there are apostates; etc.; and many prophecies have not yet been fulfilled.

The apostle Paul told believers that they possessed the earnest of the Spirit (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13). Believers are presently able to realize through the personal indwelling agency of the Holy Spirit as an earnest what this same Spirit will perform in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's final outpouring is not to be confined to the saints who have the earnest, because it extends to the Jewish remnant, to the Gentiles, and to all the earth of which Pentecost was a publicly manifested pledge. It is sad when men rashly antedate the Spirit, making baptism in the Spirit present when it is future. A person is incorrect to take a prophecy, apply it to his personal life, and claim its fulfillment in himself. One is incorrect to refer to this dispensation as the dispensation of

the Spirit. It is the age of grace when the Holy Spirit is operating and calling out a people for Jesus Christ.

Miracles to confirm the word have ceased. If truth were perpetuated today in the assemblies of Christ by miracles without any intermission, the baptism in the Spirit would have failed in its significance as a pledge of its future fulfillment. To falsely assign such signs proceeding from the Holy Spirit vilifies the mighty Agent through whom the covenant shall be fulfilled. The miracles at Pentecost were God-given signs of the kingdom as a pledge, and the baptism in the Spirit was an earnest of that which is yet to come.

Israel's rejection was crystallized in the first part of Acts. Therefore, signs and wonders have been withdrawn until the coming kingdom. Since Joel does not refer to the assembly of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost could not be the complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The kingdom and the gospel were first proclaimed to the Jews, but they rejected the spiritual requirements of the kingdom—repentance and faith—and even crucified the King in fulfillment of prophecy. This crucifixion was ordained by God for the purpose of redemption and to effect a worldwide proclamation of the gospel for the conversion of the elect.

Peter did not identify the events. He identified the power, as the Lord had predicted in Acts 1:8. Baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost was designed for the bestowal of supernatural power. The infant assembly was baptized into the realm of the Spirit—the sphere of power—to accomplish the purpose for which Christ appointed the assembly. The Spirit who formerly dwelt with His people dwells in us since Pentecost.

Another proof that the Holy Spirit did not come on all flesh at Pentecost is Joel's term "afterward [after this]" of Joel 2:28. After what? After God's statement that He has received Israel

back: “And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:27). The outpouring of the Spirit in those days will extend to all flesh. It cannot be restricted to Israel who shall be born in a day before the establishment of the kingdom, but it will include everyone in the kingdom. “All flesh” includes elect Jews and Gentiles—the body of Christ which is now being built (Matt. 16:18). We will all be in the kingdom, and the baptism in the Spirit will be universally experienced. Baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost was an additional blessing to what the recipients already possessed. When the Spirit is poured out universally, it will be another added blessing to God’s people. The experience at that time will be greater than the experience at Pentecost.

COMPLETE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECIES OF JOEL AND JOHN

The kingdom is connected with baptism in the Spirit in complete fulfillment of the prophecy given by Joel and John the Baptist in Joel 2:28-30 and in Matthew 3:11. To avoid misunderstanding, it is proper to say that the Spirit works in regeneration and sanctification during this dispensation, but this is not His final work. On the promises of physical blessings, another outpouring of the Spirit will follow. Did Joel imply that physical prosperity must precede spiritual fullness? To Joel these are the tokens that God has returned to His people, Israel. The drought and famine were signs of God's anger and judgment. But now there were physical proofs that God had taken Israel back, and this is ascribed to the unconditional covenant that God made with Israel. God has not turned His back on the covenant. It is unconditional. God has not forgotten His people (Rom. 11:1). They shall eat in plenty, be satisfied, and praise the Lord their God who will deal wondrously with them; and God's people shall know that God is in the midst of Israel and that He is the Lord their God (Joel 2:26,27).

Joel climbed higher than he had ever climbed when he looked into the future and gave the prophecy recorded in Joel 2:28. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” In this verse, note the following: (1) Joel predicted the time of the Spirit’s outpouring—“afterward,” after God has received Israel back (v. 27). (2) He predicted the Author—God, “I will pour.” (3) He predicted the extent—“all flesh.” (4) He predicted the effect—“prophesy,” “dream dreams,” “see visions,” etc. This prophecy was not fulfilled during the ministry of Christ, at Calvary, or at Pentecost; but it shall be fulfilled when the kingdom is established. Hence, the baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost was only a pledge, or foretaste, of the future fulfillment which will take place at the time the Holy Spirit is poured out on “all flesh.” “All flesh” includes more than was realized at Pentecost or will ever be realized until its fulfillment in the kingdom.

The blessings in the kingdom will be greater in degree than the blessings of Pentecost. Among the future blessings is the experience of fire. The fire that is included in the record of John’s prediction in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 will then be the blessing of God’s people. As the assembly of Jesus Christ does not presently use the keys of the kingdom, so does she not presently experience the blessing of fire.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire of Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 cannot be divided into a blessing and a curse. It does not make sense to divide John’s promise into both a blessing and a curse. All of God’s people will inherit the kingdom together, experience the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and take part in the blessing of judging with Jesus Christ. Fire is referred to three times in both Matthew 3 and Luke 3. Matthew 3:10, Matthew 3:12, Luke 3:9, and Luke

3:17 all refer to God's judgment. But in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16, John was promising a blessing to the people of God. This was a blessing for those who would be baptized in the sphere of the Spirit; and being thus baptized, the fire represents God's judgment in which we shall participate. Jesus Christ will reign as King, and we will reign with Him as kings and priests, serving under Him. We will be like Christ; and we will be associated with Him as associate kings and priests, performing similar offices under our great King and Lord. All this is wrapped up in blessing, not a curse.

Fire is used two ways in Scripture. It is used in the sense of purification, or cleansing, and it is also used in the sense of judgment. Fire denotes judging and executing judgment in reference after reference in both Old and New Testaments (Deut. 4:24; II Thess. 1:8; Heb. 12:29; etc.). Those in the kingdom will join with Jesus Christ in executing judgment. Paul reminded the Corinthians that the saints shall judge the world and angels (I Cor. 6:2,3). God promised the assembly of Jesus Christ that those who overcome and keep His works shall have power over the nations (Rev. 2:26).

Joel's prophecy will be completely fulfilled in the future baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Pentecost was not the kingdom. The assembly of Christ and not Israel was being dealt with at Pentecost. It is a sad fact that many religionists have transferred to themselves Scriptures that belong to a future age. Those in the kingdom will join with Christ in executing judgment on the unregenerate, which will be a blessing to the regenerate. This judgment will take place when the kingdom is in its time stage. The time stage will be the 1,000 years preceding the eternal state of the kingdom. All who have the earnest of the Spirit have some understanding of what the Lord Jesus Christ will do when His Spirit shall be poured out on all flesh. There will be people in their flesh and blood bodies in the first phase of the kingdom. People will

die during this millennium. But in the eternal phase of the kingdom, everyone will be in his flesh and bone body; therefore, there will be no death. Flesh and blood shall not inherit the eternal phase of the kingdom. The first aspect of the kingdom shall be purged before the eternal aspect begins (Matt. 13).

The physical phenomena of the sun being turned to darkness and the moon turned to blood will precede the great and terrible day of the Lord (Joel 2:31). But these did not accompany the baptism in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter knew that Pentecost was not the terrible day of the Lord but was only a partial fulfillment of the prediction by Joel and John. He explained the terrible day of the Lord in his second Epistle, not in Acts. “Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of the heavens being set on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements burning are being melted, but according to His promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (II Pet. 3:12,13—translation).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire cannot be Israel as a nation entering into the events of Joel’s prophecy. Although Peter quoted from Joel’s prophecy and said, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16), he did not identify the baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost as “all of that.” Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of the events of Joel’s prophecy. Both Joel and John prophesied the conclusion in the absolute fulfillment. All the Old Testament prophets prophesied in that manner. The complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy will not take place until the reality of the day of the Lord. In that day, all sham and hypocrisy will be manifested. Only that which is of God will stand. Joel’s prophecy is timely in our apostate days, reminding us that the coming of the Lord is approaching.

The day of the Lord signifies judgment. It is used in a local sense. It was experienced by the people of Joel's time, and it will be experienced in a final sense. It was the Lord's judgment on Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem at that time, but it will also be God's judgment on Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem in a final sense. Joel combined both the historical and prophetic, both the near and the remote. This is a remarkable feature that we find again and again throughout Old Testament Scripture.

The kingdom will not be established without a period of violence and war: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14). How utterly vain are the expectations of collective humanity unified and deified in the person of the antichrist (Rev. 13). The Spirit predicts the formation of a mighty confederation under the auspices of this last head of depraved humanity (Rev. 17:12). The formation of this confederacy is still future. Whatever confederations have existed in the past were only partial fulfillments looking forward to the last great array in the kingdom of the earth against the Messiah (Rev. 19). The period of violence and war against antichrist is described in Revelation 19, II Thessalonians 2, Isaiah 63, and many other prophecies. This last great war will create the greatest devastation of any preceding it. God will execute justice on the ungodly. The wicked must fill up the measure of their sin, and this will have taken place before the Lord returns (Joel 3:1-16).

Vengeance belongs to God: "...Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19b). "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people" (Heb. 10:30). Christians long for the day of absolute justice under Jesus Christ. The time for absolute justice on earth will not be executed until the time the assembly has been perfected. Then we shall use the keys of authority given to the

perfected assembly to participate in judgment. God's vengeance will become ours in the Lord Jesus Christ, our King, the King of the Jews.

The Hebrew word for vengeance is *nagam*, which means a rendering of justice, retribution, punishment, or satisfaction. The Hebrew root word with its derivations is used 70 times in the Old Testament. Although theologically important, it is greatly misunderstood. In modern thinking, vengeance and revenge, coming from either God or man, are ideas that appear to have no ethical validity. Those with this thinking have no concept of God's holy character. Understood in the light of God's whole counsel, vengeance is understood to be a necessary aspect of the history of redemption. There are a few cases in the Old Testament where vengeance is executed by man. Although the Hebrew word *nagam* is not used in Genesis 9:6, this verse teaches capital punishment: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Other passages warn men not to take vengeance into their own hands. These are not contradictory. A classic use of the Hebrew word *nagam* is the Lord's statement in Deuteronomy 32:35 and 41—"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence....I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." God cannot be true to His holy character and justice if He does not punish in justice. The prophet Isaiah stressed the day of the Lord's vengeance. We will rejoice when we see God's absolute justice executed: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. 58:10,11). Does this teach that Christians must hate their enemies? We, like David, hate those who hate the Lord: "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect

hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Ps. 139:21,22). Christ was not rejecting the teaching of just punishment in His sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7, but He was showing that just punishment awaits the time for it. Psalm 50 brings this into focus by showing that men curse the Lord while He remains silent. However, the time is coming when His silence will be broken. He will roar out of Zion (Joel 3:16). He will speak in vengeance and execute absolute justice. We await this day of reckoning, which will not occur until the assembly of Jesus Christ has been perfected.

Since man’s examination of himself and others cannot be absolutely perfect because he cannot discern motives, Paul said, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who both will bring to light the hidden things of the darkness, and will make known the counsels of the hearts: and then praise shall be to each one from God” (I Cor. 4:5—translation). A distinction is made between the exhortation not to judge in I Corinthians 4:5 and the exhortation to judge in I Corinthians 5:12-13 with the use of “before the time” in the first reference. A just judgment must be made now on the basis of one’s fruits, works, words, and lifestyle (Matt. 7). Christians must judge themselves and offending members in the local assembly (I Cor. 5:12; 11:31).

The Greek word for judge in I Corinthians 4:5 is a present active imperative of *krino*, which means to judge, pronounce judgment, preside over with the power of giving judicial decision, or examine. Since it is an imperative, it is a command. This judgment, or examination, goes beyond fruit that is seen. It descends into the soul. Therefore, it is not viewed externally. The context of verse 5 proves the Lord alone can examine and render judgment on the things that are hidden. All the things in our lives that we have successfully hidden from others will on this day be brought to light, and we will stand fully revealed before the Lord. Since Paul was incom-

petent to judge either himself or his service, the Corinthians could neither examine nor make a just judgment of Paul's motive and service.

The time for judging in the sense of I Corinthians 4:5 will be subsequent to our being judged at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, where we will be rewarded according to our individual performances in time (I Cor. 3:13-15; II Cor. 5:10). There, the counsels (plural of *boule*, which means purpose, design, determination by implication, secret thoughts of the mind, or the mediation of the mind) of the hearts of others will have been brought to light. Every born again person will receive praise (*epainos*, which means approval, commendation, recognition, or reward) from God. This is the judgment of God's people; it is not the general judgment at the great white throne.

The perfected collective body of Jesus Christ shall be given the keys to the kingdom. This authority will be executed perfectly under the perfect King, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of David. Being perfected and having the keys of Christ's kingdom, we shall render absolute justice, and God's vengeance will become ours because we will be concerned only about His vengeance. Righteous judgment by us is impossible before that time. But we shall at that time render absolute justice in our judgments when we execute our examination (I Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26,27). Jesus Christ promised His disciples the blessing of rendering absolute justice in their examination. Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27), was answered by Christ's promise to the disciples that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel: "And Jesus said to them, truly I am saying to you, the ones having followed me in the regeneration [*paliggenesia*, which means rebirth, new birth, new age, or next world] when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you shall

sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28—translation).

Some say the word for regeneration refers to the new birth. They are correct pertaining to its use in Titus 3:5. But in Matthew 19:28, the Lord was talking to already regenerated disciples; therefore, it refers to the new age—the messianic restoration. The time element is explicitly stated. It has to do with the future, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory. At that time, the apostles will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The names of the twelve apostles will be inscribed in the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). Hence, the twelve apostles will have a part in that which is future. Furthermore, they had a part in the foundation of the assembly (Eph. 2:19,20).

Those who have forsaken all for the name of Jesus Christ “shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life in its fullness” (Matt. 19:29—translation). The regeneration—messianic restoration of all things—of Acts 3:19-21 is not one single act. It includes the glorification of the bodies of Christians who make up the *ekklesia*—the body of Christ. It also involves Israel’s future restoration when God will deal with them nationally. The judgments that will take place during the millennium before the eternal state of the kingdom are also included in this restoration. Those who will participate in this judging will include the Jewish branches that have been broken off, the assembly that has been grafted in, and the restored natural branches (Rom. 11).

With these truths in mind, any person who spiritualizes the kingdom in order to bring about the teaching of amillennialism concerning the Lord’s future is dishonest in dealing with the Scriptures. One cannot isolate one text and try to make all other texts fit it. He must consider all the passages relative to the subject. He is then in a position to arrive at a

correct conclusion when all the various Scriptures pertaining to the subject harmonize.

There is no doubt about the spirituality of the literal kingdom. Jesus Christ had a material body while He walked among men. He was also filled with the Spirit. There was none more spiritual than He who has the Spirit without measure. When the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh in the kingdom, the kingdom will be very much a spiritual kingdom. When the King—Jesus Christ—pours out His Spirit on all flesh and the Spirit exerts His mighty energy in every direction, extending even to the material creation, surely the kingdom will be preeminently spiritual. This kingdom will not be of this unspiritual world. The literal/spiritual kingdom will be on a renovated earth on which Jesus Christ will reign, and we shall rule and reign with Him.